

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ANKARA 03682 101421Z

46

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 CU-04 INR-07 IO-13 NSAE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3493

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SCUL

SUBJECT: ROBBERY AT GORDION MUSEUM

1. ROBBERS BROKE INTO THE GORDION MUSEUM 75 MILES FROM ANKARA AT ABOUT 3 A.M. MAY 6 AND LOOTED DISPLAY CASES OF 41 PIECES OF PRICELESS PHRYGIAN ARTIFACTS. IT WAS THE LARGEST MUSEUM ROBBERY IN TURKEY IN RECENT TIMES. MUSEUM AUTHORITIES SAY THEY ARE UNABLE TO PLACE A VALUE ON THE STOLEN OBJECTS, BUT AN ORGANIZATION CALLED FRIENDS OF THE ANKARA MUSEUM IS OFFERING A REWARD OF 100,000 TURKISH LIRA (ABOUT \$6,000) FOR INFORMATION ON THE WHEREABOUTS OF THE ROBBERS OR THE STOLEN PIECES.

2. ALMOST ALL OBJECTS STOLEN WERE FROM THE SO-CALLED MIDAS TOMB, LOCATED 100 YARDS FROM THE MUSEUM. THE MIDAS TOMB WAS OPENED IN 1957 BY A GROUP OF TURKISH AND AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGISTS HEADED BY THE LATE RODNEY YOUNG OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA WHO DURING THE COURSE OF 24 YEARS STUDY IN GORDION EXCAVATED 25 OF THE AREA'S 70 BURIAL MOUNDS. ARCHAEOLOGISTS SAY THE MIDAS TOMB WAS CONSTRUCTED IN THE LATE EIGHTH CENTURY B.C.

3. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF SIX PIECES OF GOLD JEWELRY AND A 9 1/2 CENTIMETER HIGH TERRACOTTA BUST OF KING MIDAS, ALL STOLEN OBJECTS WERE OF BRONZE. INCLUDED IN THE THEFT WAS A 50 CENTIMETER HIGH CAULDRON DECORATED WITH FOUR SPHINX PROMTOMES, EIGHT TREFOIL-MOUTHED JUGS, NINE FIBULAE (PHRYGIAN SAFETY PINS), PLUS NINE BOWLS AND SEVERAL LADLES AND VASES. RAREST OF ALL

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WAS THE TERRACOTTA MIDAS BUST, WHICH ARCHAEOLOGISTS ESTIMATE

WAS FIRED FOUR CENTURIES AFTER CONSTRUCTION OF THE TOMB. THE BUST SHOWS MIDAS WITH THE EARS OF AN ASS, WEARING A PHRYGIAN CAP.

4. TURKISH POLICE, AND FRIENDS OF THE ANKARA MUSEUM, ARE DISTRIBUTING LEAFLETS DESCRIBING THE MISSING ARTIFACTS TO UNESCO, ICOM, AND TO COLLECTORS AND MUSEUM AUTHORITIES IN EUROPE AND THE UNITED STATES IN AN ATTEMPT TO FORESTALL SALE OF THE ANTIQUITIES ON THE ILLEGAL MARKET.
MACOMBER

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